

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
WILLIAM H. WARD HOUSE

HABS No. DE-334

LOCATION:

North side of Road 244, .25 mile east of Road 246,
Georgetown vicinity, Sussex County, Delaware

USGS Georgetown Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 18: 467220.4268340

PRESENT OWNER:

Delaware Department of Transportation, State Transportation
Building, Dover, Delaware 19903

PRESENT USE:

Vacant

SIGNIFICANCE:

The William H. Ward house is an example of the single-pile, hall-parlor-plan house type utilized in Delaware from the middle seventeenth century, persisting in the lower regions of the state through much of the nineteenth century. Its construction includes both traditional braced timber framing and balloon framing. The relatively late date of the house (circa 1880) is indicative of the general conservatism that was characteristic of rural domestic architectural practices in lower Delaware. The subsequent addition of a rear wing is consistent with the relocation of service activities from the front rooms of dwellings to rear areas, permitting a more formalized use of the "hall." Of additional interest is the 1-1/2 story configuration of the main block, since dwellings of two stories are dominant in the nineteenth-century architectural development of rural Delaware. Rear ells of 1-1/2 stories were not uncommon, but the utilization of the half-story for the main body of the house is relatively unusual.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. **Date(s) of Erection:** The main block of the house appears to date to about 1880. The rear wing was added around the turn of the century. The rear porch and lean-to appear to have been built either in association with the wing, or relatively shortly thereafter.
2. **Architect:** Unknown
3. **Original and Subsequent Owners:** References to the Chain of Title to the land upon which the structure stands are in the office of the Recorder of Deeds, Sussex County Courthouse, Georgetown, Delaware.

The structure is situated on a 6.17-acre tract numbered 9 on Sussex County tax map 1-35-10.

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1870 | Deed, December 26, 1870, recorded in Volume 83, page 482. David M. Reynolds to Levin B. Pepper. |
| 1880 | Deed, May 29, 1880, recorded in Volume 92, page 585. Levin B. Pepper to William H. Ward. |
| 1912 | Deed, September 27, 1912, recorded in Volume 182, page 586. Orpha J. Ward, George Ward, Robert G. and Jennie Ward, and Eunice and William Johnson to Frank B. Ward. |
| 1942 | Deed, November 27, 1942, recorded in Volume 339, page 233. Delema Reed et al. to Lillie M. Ward. |
| 1976 | Deed, June 3, 1976, recorded in Volume 793, page 264. Katharine M. Rust et al. to Glen and Linda L. Eskridge. |

4. **Builder, contractor, suppliers:** Unknown.
5. **Original Plans and Construction:** No original plans have been located, and given the vernacular character of the house, it is unlikely that any were produced. Based upon features such as the 2/2 windows, circular-sawed wood (lath, and also the treads and risers of the stair), four-panel doors, and stock architectural elements, the 1-1/2-story, hall-parlor-plan main block of the house appears to date to about 1870-1880.

6. **Alterations and Additions:** The rear wing is a later addition, as evidenced by the filling of one of the original rear windows in the "parlor" from the inside (leaving the window sash and frame visible on the other side), probably dating from around the turn of the century. The enclosed porch and lean-to off the rear wing were either built in association with the wing, or relatively shortly thereafter. The large brick fireplace in the "hall" was filled in to accommodate a stove thimble, at an unknown date.

In 1987, some years after the house was vacated, the owners at the time constructed a pole-type steel-clad farm equipment shed across the front and around the gable ends of the main block. This shed was removed sometime after 1992.

B. Historical Context

The deed history of the property has been traced to 1866, when Asa Sharp sold a 125-acre tract in Georgetown Hundred to David Reynolds for \$1000. The parcel was among several owned by Jacob Sharp when he died in 1849, leaving Asa Sharp among his heirs. David Reynolds held the 125-acre tract until 1870, at which time he sold it for \$600 to Levin Pepper (Sussex County [hereinafter SC] Deeds 83: 479; 83:482; SC Probate Record A98:75).

In 1870, William H. Ward was a 29-year-old farm laborer residing in Cedar Creek Hundred. His household included his 24-year-old wife, Orpha (whom he had married in 1864), and their daughter Eunice, then two years old (Delaware Marriage Records, vol. 48: 98; U.S., Bureau of the Census 1879). Ten years later, in 1880, William Ward purchased the 125-acre tract in Georgetown Hundred from Levin Pepper for \$700 (SC Deeds 92: 585). In the Federal population census of that year, Ward had moved to his new farm, and had three more children, including Robert, 4, and Frank, 1 (U.S., Bureau of the Census 1880). The Sussex County tax assessment for 1880-1884 indicated that Ward owned a horse, a cow, a pair of oxen, and a sow and pigs. The small number of livestock and the presence of the pair of oxen suggest that Ward's livelihood was based on crops, rather than livestock. By the 1888-1892 assessment, however, oxen were no longer included in the listing of Ward's livestock.

William Ward had died by the time the 1892-96 assessment was undertaken. His wife, Orpha, appears to have inherited the farm. In the 1900 Federal population census, she was listed as the head of a household that now included only two children, Frank, 20, and George, 17. In November of 1905, Frank Ward was married to Lillie M. Wilson (Delaware Marriage Records, Vital Statistics, Folders 26-C and 9, 1905). Their first child (unnamed in the Birth Index at the Hall of Records) was born in August of the following year. As of the 1910 Federal population census, Frank and Lillie Ward were not living on the family farm. In 1912, however, Orpha Ward and Frank's siblings conveyed their interest in the farm to him (SC Deeds 182:586). The Sussex County tax assessment for 1913-1916 lists Frank Ward as owner of 119 acres (his father had previously sold six acres out of the farm), two horses, one mule, and one sow.

Frank Ward died in 1942, leaving his wife, three married daughters, and a son. The children granted Lillie Ward 58 acres of the farm for her to occupy for the rest of her natural life. Lillie Ward died in 1974, ending this life estate. Two years later, the Ward heirs sold the property to the present owners, Glen and Linda Eskridge. The deed included a proviso for one Arthur Donovan to live in the house for the rest of his natural life, with the right to have a garden and to garage one automobile (SC Deeds 339: 233; 793: 264). The house has been vacant since at least 1983.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural Character:** The subject property is a modest, vernacular, 1-1/2-story wood-frame hall-parlor plan house with side-gable roof, three-bay facade and one-story rear wing, largely devoid of ornamentation.
2. **Condition of Fabric:** The house is in poor condition, due to lack of occupancy and routine upkeep. Large areas of termite damage are present at first-floor-level framing elements and flooring. Vandalism has left most windows and doors damaged, destroyed, or removed. Significant amounts of rot and deterioration are attributable to rain/snow infiltration through holes in siding and doors/windows. There is active insect, rodent, and bird infestation.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall Dimensions:** The main block is 1-1/2 stories, with gabled east and west ends, roughly 16'-6" x 32'-0"; the wing addition is one story with a gabled north end, roughly 10'-0" x 16'-4". Also, a shed lean-to addition, roughly 8'-9" x 10'-0", is appended to the north wall of the north wing, and a 7'-0" wide enclosed porch is attached to the full length of the west side of the north wing and lean-to. Off the east wall of the rear wing is a flat-roofed shed enclosure, roughly 12'-0" x 16'-4".
2. **Foundations:** In the main block, brick piers are located in the four corners, at the midpoints of east and west gable elevations, and at roughly 6' to 8' intervals on the north and south elevations. The piers are 8" wide, vary from 2'-0" to 3'-0" in length, and extend approximately 8" below grade. In the north wing, 8" x 16" concrete block piers are located in the four corners; they rest on grade. There are no foundations beneath the shed lean-to addition, the enclosed porch, or the flat-roofed shed enclosure.
3. **Walls:** The main block is a braced timber frame with 4" x 4" wood posts at each of the four corners and on each side of the window openings (thus forming the jambs

of the window frames). These posts are continuous from the first floor sill plate to the attic plate. There are infill studs between these posts that act primarily as nailers for the interior plaster lath and the exterior wood siding. The walls of the north wing and lean-to addition each contain 2" x 4" studs, irregularly spaced (roughly between 21" and 24" on center).

The walls of the main block are clad with horizontal, painted, tapered wood siding boards (roughly 5" exposure); the east and west gable ends are clad with vertical metal siding that dates to the enclosure of the house within the steel equipment shed in 1987. The exterior walls of the north wing are clad with horizontal siding similar to the main part of the house. The exterior walls of the north lean-to addition are vertical boards, and the siding on the north part of the flat-roofed shed enclosure appears to be textured plywood (T-111), installed so that the lines run vertically.

4. **Structural System, Framing:** The floor framing system in the main block consists of half-round log joists, spanning north-south and roughly 6" to 8" in diameter. The joists have roughly shaped tenons on the ends to frame into continuous 8" x 8" wood plates, which span between the brick foundation piers on the north and south elevations. The log joists are roughly 24" to 30" on center, and generally have less than 6" of clearance between their undersides and the crawl space grade. The attic floor joists are full 2" x 7-1/2", spaced at 24" centers, running north-south. They are let into 2" x 8" ledger boards on the north and south walls. The rafters are 2-3/4" wide and taper from 4" at the ridge to 4-1/2" at the eave, and are spaced at 24" on center. They are mitered and nailed at the ridge, and are birdsmouthed at the heels to rest on the attic plate. Collar ties (2-3/4" x 4") are nailed into the sides of each rafter at mid-height.

The floor framing system of the north wing consists of 2" x 4" joists spanning east-west, and spaced at 21" to 24" on center. The joists clear-span between the wood sill plates on the east and west walls that span between the concrete block foundation piers. The attic floor joists are 2" x 6", also spaced roughly 21" to 24" on center; they are nailed to the irregularly sized roof rafters (typically 2" x 4"). The roof rafters are mitered and nailed at the ridge, and there are no collar ties.

The floor and shed roof framing of the north lean-to addition is modern dimensional 2x4 lumber, spaced at 21" to 24" on center. The floor appears to rest directly on grade; there is no evidence of a plate or masonry foundation (although it is possible that a plate could have been destroyed by termites and the surrounding framing crushed down on it).

5. **Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads:** There is no porch on the south (front) elevation of the house. There was probably a set of steps at this location at one time

(since the grade is roughly 12" to 15" below floor level); however, no evidence survives.

The enclosed porch on the west side of the north wing and lean-to addition have dimensional 2x4 lumber-frame walls and roof, with fixed two-light windows covered on the exterior with horizontal wood siding.

The flat-roofed shed enclosure has a dirt floor and modern dimensional 2x6 rafters spanning east-west that are attached to the east wall of the north addition and rest on a wood beam (covered - its size could not be determined) on the east side.

6. **Chimneys:** The main block contains an interior brick chimney at each gable end. These ridge chimneys feature three courses of corbelled brick, which form caps. The west chimney is three courses taller, and the brick appears darker and somewhat more worn. A brick chimney base exists at the north end of the ridge of the roof of the north wing; however, all the bricks have either been removed, or have fallen off.

7. **Openings:**

- a. **Doorways and Doors:** The main entrance is situated in the westernmost bay of the three-bay south (front) elevation; the original door has long been removed, and a door salvaged from another building was installed in its place. It is a wood unit with a large single-light window above three raised wooden panels. There is also a wood screen door on the exterior of the door opening; it may be original. The door opening is cased with flat 1" x 4" boards on the jambs and head.

There is a door opening into the west elevation of the enclosed west porch; it contains a four-light glazed upper section and two raised wood panels on the lower portion.

- b. **Windows and Shutters:** Windows on the first floor of the main block are wooden double-hung units with 2/2 wood sashes; there are two windows in the south (front) wall and one on the west wall. The upper story is illuminated by wooden fixed window units with two lights; there are three windows in the south wall and two in the north wall. In addition, the west wall of the attic contains two wooden double-hung units with 4/4 sashes. All of the windows of the main block are cased on the exterior with flat wooden 1" x 4" boards on the jambs, the heads, and below the sills.

The north wing has two windows in its east wall and one in the west wall; these are similar in design to the first-floor windows of the main part of the

house. The lean-to addition contains one window on its east side and one window on its north side; these windows are also similar in design to the windows of the main part of the house. The enclosed west porch contains nine fixed wooden windows; each window has a two-light wooden sash affixed to the frame.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, Covering: The main block has a gable roof; the ridge runs east-west. Wood lath spaced at 6" supports a covering of wood shingles, on top of which are asphalt shingles. Those on the north roof slope are patterned, and appear somewhat older than those laid on the south slope. The gable roof of the north wing is also clad with asphalt shingles over wood shingles. The enclosed west porch and flat-roofed shed enclosure both have shed roofs covered with asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice, Eaves: The north and south eaves of the main block have exposed rafters with decoratively-shaped ends. The exposed soffits are faced with beadboard. The gable rakes projecting roughly 12" from the east and west walls are clad with sheet metal.

The east and west eaves of the north wing also feature projecting rafter ends; they are not decoratively cut, however, and the sheathing of the soffit consists of plain boards. On the north lean-to addition, the rafters project forward roughly 6", and a 1" x 4" wood fascia is face-nailed onto them. On the west porch, the roof and rafters project forward roughly 10" on the west porch enclosure; however, there is no cornice.

c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: None

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

a. Basement: None

b. First Floor: The first floor of the main block has a hall-parlor plan, with the hall on the west and the parlor on the east. The single room of the north wing was used as a kitchen. The one-room north lean-to was probably used as a pantry. The enclosed porch on the west side is a single room that contained a pump and sink in 1992 (these elements had been removed by 1996).

- c. **Second Floor:** The upper floor of the main block, in effect a finished attic space, contains two rooms. There are no habitable attic spaces anywhere else in the building.
- 2. **Stairways:** The only means of accessing the upper (attic) floor is a steep, enclosed wood winder stair rising from the hall at the northwest corner of the main block. There is a railing at the attic level, consisting of a plain wood end post (1-1/2" x 3-1/2" with chamfered sides) and three plain wood (square, unturned) balusters, spaced roughly 8" on centers.
- 3. **Flooring:** All floors in the main block feature face-nailed, 1" thick, random-width (average 4" to 7"), tongue and groove wood boards. On the floors of all but the east attic room are installed modern commercial covering (similar to Armstrong sheets) that resemble area rug patterns. The coverings generally allow 12" to 18" of floor to be exposed at the walls in each room; these exposed areas are painted.

Baseboards in all the rooms are 3/4" x 5-1/2" flat wood boards with 3/4" quarter-rounds at the floors.

- 4. **Wall and Ceiling Finish:** The interior walls of the main block are finished with a 1/4" skim coat of hair-embedded plaster, with numerous layers of wallpaper (now peeling) on all wall surfaces in all rooms. First-floor ceilings have exposed plaster; the attic ceilings are clad with peeling wallpaper. The walls in the north wing are finished with painted vertical beaded board. The ceiling in this room is of drywall that was installed but neither taped, spackled, sanded, nor painted. In the west enclosed porch, the walls and ceiling are both painted vertical beaded boards.
- 5. **Openings:**
 - a. **Doorways and Doors:** Doors in the main block are painted wood four-panel (2 over 2) units with slightly raised panels. The openings are cased with painted flat 1" x 4" trim boards on the jambs and heads.
 - b. **Windows:** Windows in the main block and wing are all cased with painted 1" x 4" flat boards on the jambs and heads; they have wood aprons and 1" x 4" painted wood stools beneath.
- 6. **Decorative Features and Trim:** On the west interior wall of the hall is a painted 1" x 2" wood trim with a 3/4" quarter-round below and a 1" x 6" flat board on top. This molding surrounds a section of wall board covering the opening of a brick fireplace large enough to have once been used for cooking. A thimble for a now-removed stove is inserted into the wallboard. The mantel shelf applied to the east wall of the

parlor, above a stove thimble, features a scalloped apron and shelf supported on two curved brackets; the leading edges of the pieces are molded. The mantel shelf in the east attic room, 2" thick and 6" deep, has rounded-notch corners. It spans the jamb faces of the closets located on either side. The mantel shelf is mounted on a 15-1/2"-high wood panel which features a scalloped apron.

7. **Hardware:** Victorian-era box latches with knobs remain on first-floor doors. The closet doors in the east attic room feature steeple finial hinges and patterned spring-bolt cupboard latches. The door to the winder stair has an early lift-type latch that has been modified and painted.

8. **Mechanical Equipment:**

- a. **Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation:** The house has no mechanical systems of these kinds. Based on the location of thimbles, stoves were once present in the hall and parlor. A stovepipe-sized hole cut through the flooring in front of the chimney in the west attic room appears to have directed heat upward from a stove in the hall below.
- b. **Lighting:** Thirty-amp electrical service with knob and tube wiring was installed at an unknown date to power a single electrical outlet and one porcelain light fixture in the center of the ceiling in each room of the main block (except the hall) and in the north wing.
- c. **Plumbing:** The house had no interior plumbing. A well pump was situated in the enclosed west porch, as evidenced by the pump sink and base cabinet still extant in the northwest corner. Locations of wells and privies/outhouses not known.

- D. **Site:**

1. **General Setting and Orientation:** The property is entered via a partially graveled drive off Route 244. The drive extends about 600 feet into the property to the house, which faces approximately southwest. In the early 1990s, the house was surrounded by cultivated fields, with the residents living in a mobile home on the front of the property near the highway. Since that time the cornfields, planted to within 20 feet of the sides and rear of the house, have been replaced by constructed wetlands. Pond-retained water now flanks the house on the west, north and east, with the pond banks beginning about 100 feet from the building's perimeter.
2. **Historic Landscape Design:** None

3. Outbuildings: None

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings:** None
- B. Early Views:** None
- C. Interviews:** Mr. Glen Eskridge, Georgetown, Delaware (1992)
- D. Bibliography:**

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Records Consulted at the Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware:

- Birth Index
- Marriage Record Index
- Probate Record Index
- Sussex County Tax Assessments, 1880-1916

Records Consulted at the Sussex County Courthouse, Georgetown, Delaware:

- Deeds
- Orphans' Court Records
- Probate Records

United States Bureau of the Census

- 1870 Ninth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Delaware, Sussex County. Microfilm on file at Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.
- 1880 Tenth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Delaware, Sussex County. Microfilm on file at Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.
- 1900 Twelfth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Delaware, Sussex County. Microfilm on file at Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.
- 1910 Thirteenth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Delaware, Sussex County. Microfilm on file at Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.

2. Secondary and Published Sources:

Herman, Bernard L.

1987 *Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware, 1700-1900*. University of
Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: None known.

F. Supplemental Material: None.

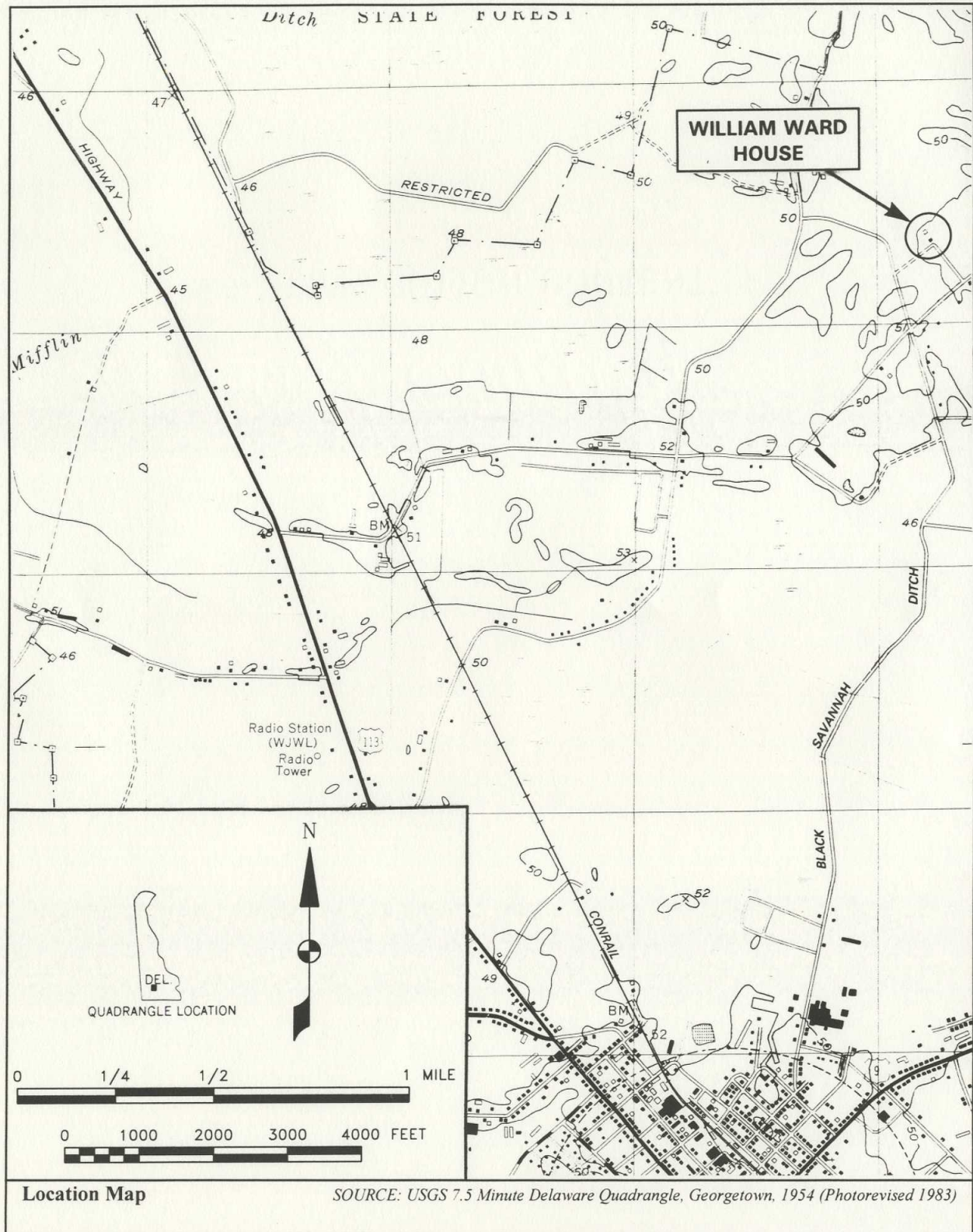
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

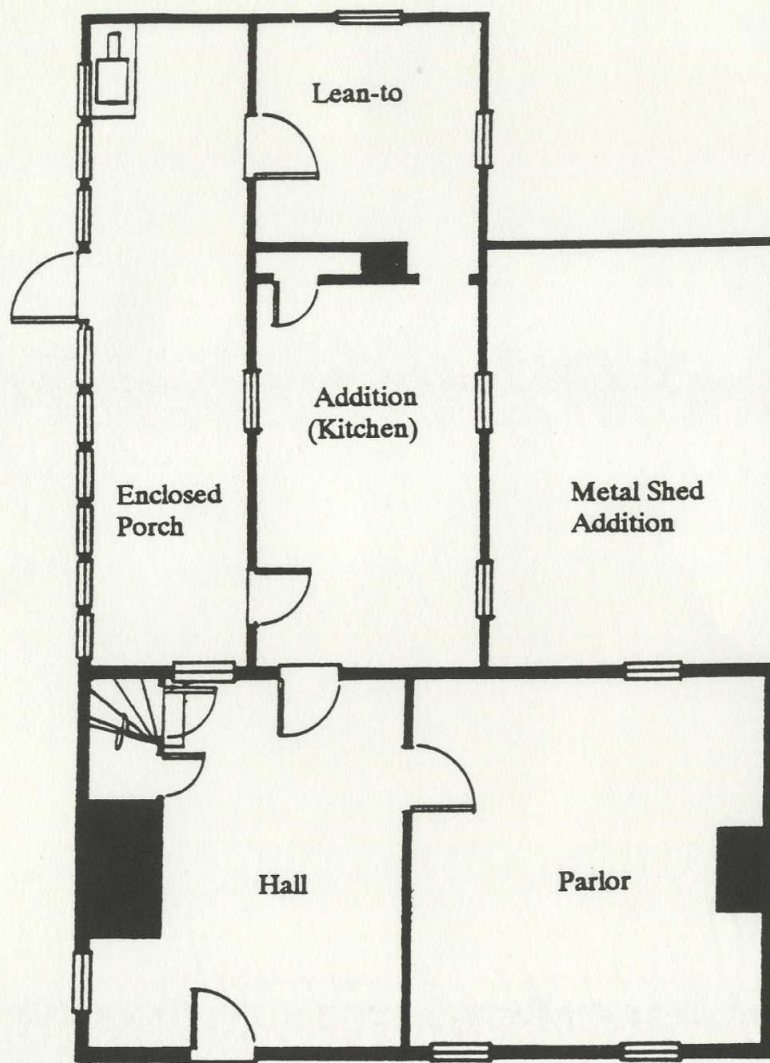
The William H. Ward House was recorded for HABS under the provisions of a Memorandum of Agreement among the Federal Highway Administration, Delaware State Historic Preservation Office, and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, in association with the dualization of US Route 113 between Milford and Georgetown, Delaware. In 1993, the Delaware Department of Transportation acquired the Ward House property for the purpose of constructing a wetland to replace wetland filled in the highway dualization.

John R. Bowie, AIA
John Bowie Associates
Media, Pennsylvania

Martha H. Bowers
The Cultural Resource Group
Louis Berger & Associates, Inc.
Needham, Massachusetts

June 1997

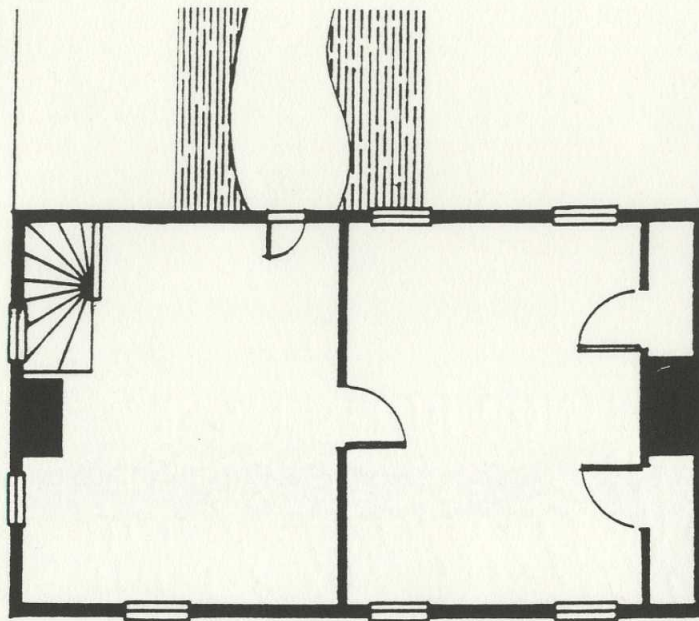




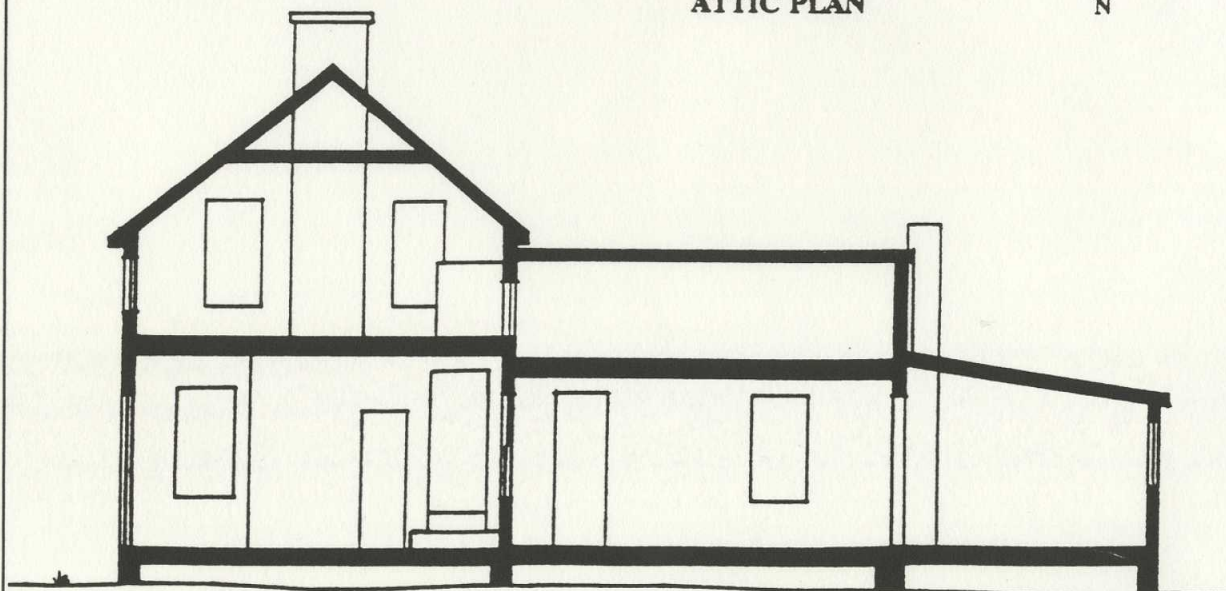
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

DRAWING 1

0 8 FT.

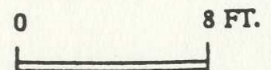


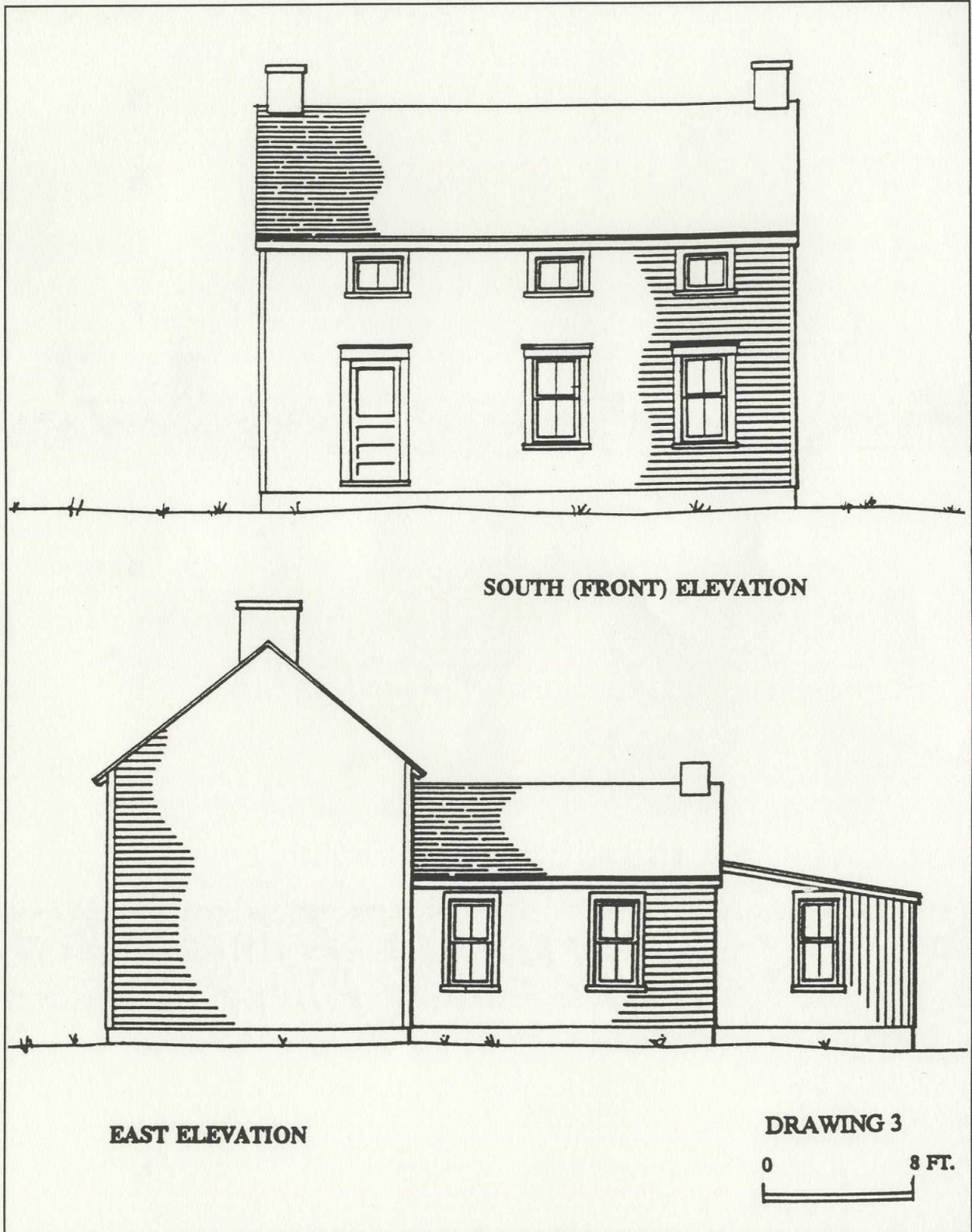
ATTIC PLAN

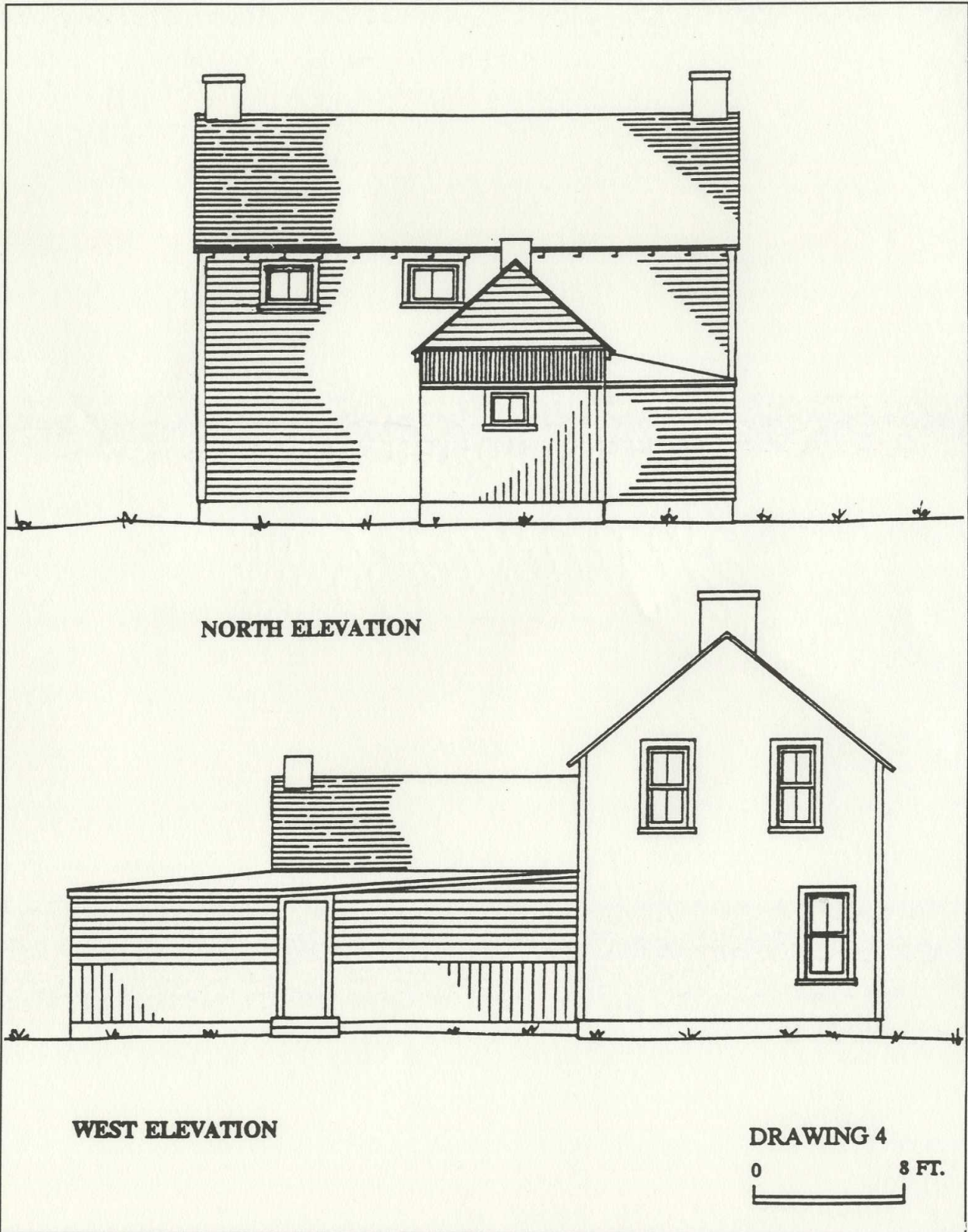


SECTION LOOKING WEST

DRAWING 2







HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

WILLIAM H. WARD HOUSE
North side of Road 244
.25 miles east of Road 246
Georgetown vicinity
Sussex County
Delaware

HABS No. DE-334

Photographer: Rob Tucher

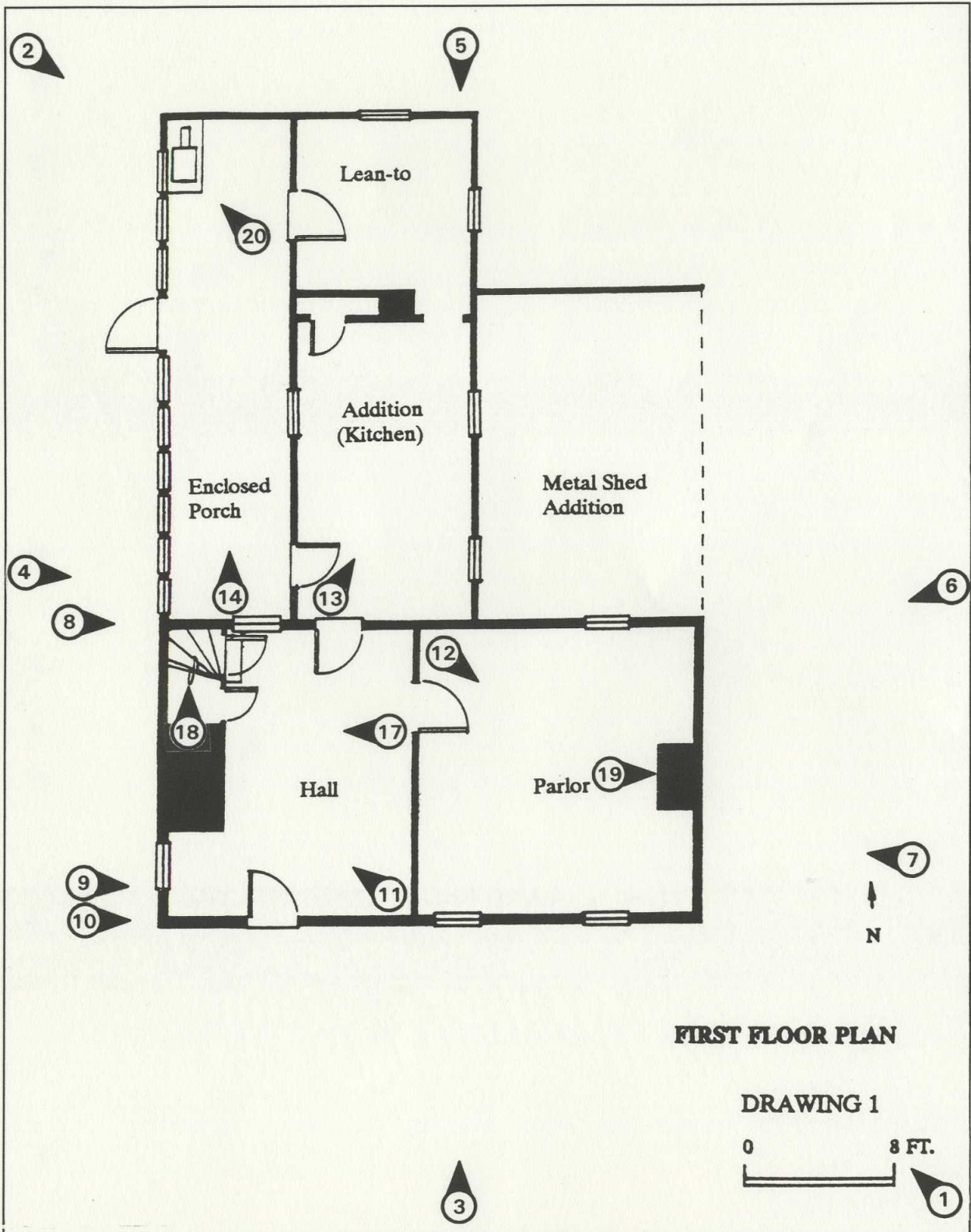
June 1997

DE-334-1	House in context, looking northwest
DE-334-2	House in context from Road 246 (Savannah Road), looking southeast
DE-334-3	South front elevation, looking north
DE-334-4	West elevation, looking east
DE-334-5	North elevation, looking south
DE-334-6	East elevation, looking west
DE-334-7	Detail, partial elevation showing diagonal nailing pattern at corner bracing, looking west
DE-334-8	Detail of shaped rafter ends and underside of eave, looking east
DE-334-9	Detail of simple cornice above window, looking east
DE-334-10	Detail of exposed wall framing, looking east
DE-334-11	Interior of hall, looking northwest
DE-334-12	Interior of parlor, looking southeast
DE-334-13	Interior of kitchen addition, looking northeast
DE-334-14	Interior of enclosed porch, looking north
DE-334-15	Interior of second floor west room, looking northwest

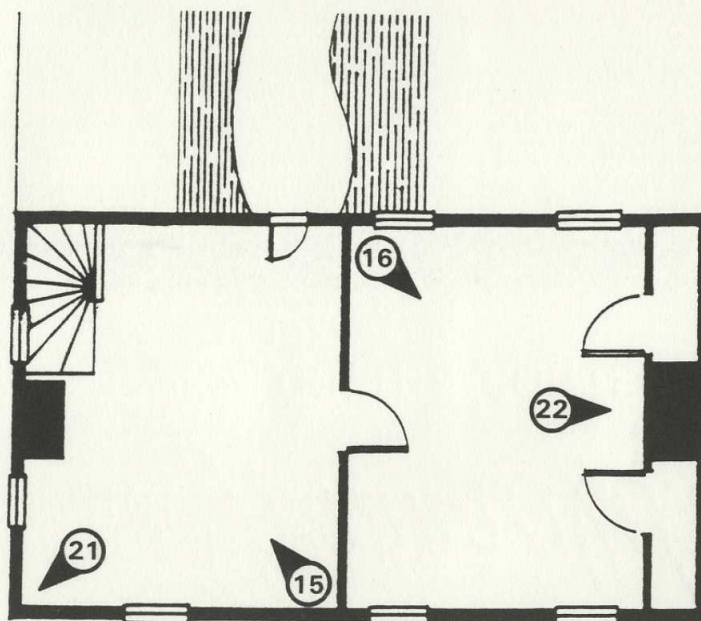
William Ward House
HABS No. DE-334 (Page 2)
Index to Photographs

DE-334-16	Interior of second floor east room, looking southeast
DE-334-17	Interior detail of hall mantel, closet door, and winder stair doorway, looking west
DE-334-18	Interior detail under winder stair in hall showing stringer in wall, looking north
DE-334-19	Interior detail of parlor mantel, looking east
DE-334-20	Interior detail of pump stand (cabinet), looking northwest
DE-334-21	Interior detail of exposed framing in west room, second floor, looking southeast
DE-334-22	Interior detail of second floor east room mantel, looking east

William Ward House
HABS No. DE-334 (Page 3)
Key to Photographs



William Ward House
HABS No. DE-334 (Page 4)
Key to Photographs



ATTIC PLAN



DRAWING 2

